

LOVE OF GOD



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THE LOVE OF GOD

BY
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Dayton, Ohio
United Brethren Publishing House
1902

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CHAPTER I.

LOVE THE CROWNING ATTRIBUTE OF GOD.

THE human mind is so constituted that, having accepted the fact of God's existence, it finds pleasure in thinking that he is a spirit, that he is eternal, all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful, every-where-present, unchangeable, holy, just, truthful, and good. It is, however, reserved to the love of God to thrill the human heart with the most profound and abiding joy. In human thinking, it must ever be that the love of God shall stand out before the mind like the highest summit in a range of mountains before the eye. Here the mind lingers longest, is most comforted and inspired. Here the heart shelters and is comforted when temptation and trial have done their distressing

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work. Under affliction, when the heart has been pierced with sorrows, one is infinitely bettered to think of God's unfailing love. Unworthy, ungrateful, ill-deserving, unstable,—still God loves us out of the great goodness of his heart.

Love is the principle of the divine nature which leads God at all times to desire the happiness and welfare of all his creatures. That the conduct of his enlightened creature may, of necessity, divert somewhat this divine emotion, we doubt not; and yet it seems clear that to the last limit of human probation God's compassion follows his wandering and sinful child. In so far as love stands for delight in one's character, it must follow that, in this sense, God loves the penitent, the good, the upright, those who follow after holiness in all their ways. He has, however, the deepest compassion for the erring and the sinful, even when their ways are offending him grievously. God is holy and just, but these attributes are ever tempered by his infinite love. Thanks be to his exalted name that this is true. It dawns upon us more and more that love is the crowning attribute of God.

When that godly woman, Jane Cooper, came

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down to her last illness, which proved to be the loathsome smallpox, she sent a note to a friend, in which she said, "I suffered the will of Jesus; all he sends is sweetened by his love." As the end drew near, she, worshiping, said: "Lord, I bless thee, that thou art with me, and all thou hast is mine. Thy love is greater than my weakness, greater than my helplessness, greater than my unworthiness." In the presence of pain and death, two of the mysteries of life, the soul is gloriously comforted in its assurance of the divine love. When our experience of God's love in redemption becomes what it may and should be, we are greatly helped. In the midst of contradictory and trying environments, consciousness of the fact that God is love becomes blessedly potent. It is the love of God that endears him to us in all our need and weakness. Come what may, we know that God delights only in the happiness of his children. Whatever comes into life that interferes with that happiness he overrules, finally, for our good.

The mercy of God is the outgoing of his love toward human need. Its manifestation is compassion, forgiveness for the penitent, and comfort to those who are in any distress. Love looks with

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pity and sympathy upon a fallen race, and, together with wisdom and mercy, comes to the rescue of the lost and perishing. The lost soul can reach its doom only by persistently sinning against goodness, love, mercy, pity, long-suffering; at the last, these unite with justice and holiness in the final judgment. One must, indeed, be truly incorrigible who goes down to night in the presence of such redemptive influences. The redemptive love of God is the strongest appeal that can be made to the mind of man. That man who does not feel the force of this appeal has succeeded in banishing the last vestige of goodness from his heart. Love is the necessity of God's being and nature. He loves because he is what he is, and he is what he is because he loves.

God is benevolent in all his designs, notwithstanding there is natural and moral evil in the world. The sun is impartial, shedding his light on the splendid mansion and the most humble cottage in equal effulgence; so the love of God gladdens and blesses all living. God maketh his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. His tender mercies are over all his works. His love is greater than our sin. Abraham, as a stranger in a strange

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land, was at home in the love of God. Upon this immutable and gracious love he rested in every trial. This love upheld him when otherwise he would have been prostrate and undone.

Love does not long exist without reaching the form of sacrifice. From Genesis to Revelation there is a gradual unfolding of the divine love. The incarnation of Jesus is the climax of this love. God could not love a race in need, as he knew ours to be, without expressing his love in the most tangible and effective way. "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Christ on the cross is the highest interpretation of the divine love. Note the antithesis, "Christ died for us, while we were yet sinners." This love that made sacrifice for sinners while they were yet sinners is the outgoing of God's heart. In the face of such love and such commendation of it, how can we be indifferent and hard-hearted? Only one attitude is appropriate in such a presence, and that is the attitude of grateful and appreciative surrender. What and who are we that we should be the trustees of such a gospel? Have we not been too ready to limit this gospel by the geography of our own

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land and community? Have we stopped to consider that this gospel is for all the world, and that God holds us individually responsible for its publication to the uttermost parts of the earth? Can it be possible that we have renewed and refreshed ourselves in the love of God only to forget that we are debtors to publish this love to all races and peoples on the face of the earth? Have we stopped to think how the heart of the heathen would thrill with joy if this redeeming love were made known to him? May God forgive our past tardiness. May he now awaken us to duty and responsibility.

The great navigator who ascended the mountains of the isthmus that connects North and South America made an important discovery when he looked upon the Pacific Ocean; but he who has, by faith, looked on Jesus until he has become a personal Saviour has made a greater one. With this discovery of Christ lifted up for our salvation, we get a glimpse of the boundless ocean of divine love, until our hearts are lifted up in rapturous praise. This day of our ecstatic vision will, however, be turned into a witness for our condemnation, if we hasten not to publish the glad

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tidings. When, oh, when shall we, as enlightened people, recognize the inevitable responsibility which this day of our vision involves? To know the love of God entails the responsibility of making it known to those who know it not. This responsibility is rational and necessary. With what abounding joy should we take it up! With what real delight should we tell the good news! An overmastering missionary impulse is the normal condition of the Christian life. It should characterize and dominate the life of the church. It should thrill and inspire the heart of the individual Christian. Having come to the mastery of the heart, it impels to solicitude and effort in behalf of others. It pours itself out like waters from the sky. It is restless save as it flows out into a world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN REDEMPTION.

“In his love and in his pity he redeemed them”
(Isa. 63:9).

LET us, in imagination, withdraw ourselves from the world in which we live, and for the time take up our abode upon a world in adjacent space, and from that viewpoint review, as in a panoramic vision, the dealings of God in securing the redemption of our own lost and imperiled race. At every stage of the review the heart is awakened to some new song of praise on account of the infinite love and goodness of God, as manifested in the whole conception and plan. From Eden to Calvary, and from Calvary to the final consummation of the new Eden, the love of God enswathes the scene. Lifted up in the midst of the centuries, at a point where the years converge, stands the uplifted cross, telling out its unfathomable mys-

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tery of love. We can hear Jesus saying, "I for the sinner's sake have been pierced with many sorrows, heeding not the dread hour of my apparent separation from the Father's most glorious presence."

"My strength is thine.
Drink from my side the cup of life immortal,
And love shall lead the path to heaven's portal."

Who can measure the depth of meaning represented by this great word "redemption"? The sacred Scriptures themselves must enable us to let down the sounding-line, that some of the depths may be noted. In many of the passages of the Old Testament where the word "redeem" occurs, the original word means, to free by avenging or repaying. Man, the sinner, had robbed God of a part of the glory due him in the universal, loving obedience of all creaturehood. This is the constant offense of all impenitent personality. This is the standing provocation of every unregenerate character. Therefore, in redemption, experimentally realized, God acts, restoring to man the ability of loving obedience to the law of righteousness. The coming of the divine energy in experimental redemption is conditioned on the atonement made

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by our adorable Lord, which atonement made perfect satisfaction to the divine law. It is apparent that Jesus, in his obedience, paid back to God that which was his due, and in that obedience he was our representative. No man has the benefit of this obedience save as he comes to God in faith and repentance. When he so comes, the benefit is gloriously potent. The penitent comes to freedom by Christ's repaying, and by the experimental realization of redemption he engages in the life of continuous repaying.

The rule of Satan over the hearts of men is the rule of a vile usurper. He has no right to such a throne. Man was made for companionship with God. The love of his heart belongs to God. The service of his whole life belongs to God. By such a bestowal of his love and service, man comes to his highest throne of power. The usurper always stands in fear and dread of the return of the one whose place has been usurped by him. The avenger may come at any time, and if he is possessed of superior power, well may the usurper stand in dread. Jesus came to avenge the usurpation of Satan over the hearts of men. He was manifest that he might destroy the works of the

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devil. The devil is a vanquished foe, for the Avenger has come. Henceforth let men resist the devil, and he will flee from them. The avenging, sin-destroying Christ enthroned in the heart of any man is a guarantee of that man's victory over the devil and his power. Henceforth let the human heart-thrones be kept for their rightful Lord. Let no rival usurp his place as Lord of our hearts and King in our lives. Men are now to find their freedom in the liberty which Christ gives.

In Isaiah 50:2, we read, "Is my hand shortened that it cannot redeem?" Here the word translated "redeem," means "separation." In experimental realization, redemption works separation. It separates the sinner from his sins. He is now able to sing from the heart, "They are all taken away." The man who has experimental realization of redemption finds his life, as to motive and quality, separated from the lives of the unregenerated. The redeemed man is separated to the life of witnessing and godly devotion. He learns the secret of walking with God in daily communion. He takes on the Christ-life and rejoices in his eternal sonship through divine grace. He gives himself up to God in holy abandonment for the

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works of righteousness, to the end that the great usurper may be displaced in the hearts of all the race. He is jealous for the honor and rightful rule of his Lord. He is impatient with half-hearted service in the name of a profession of faith in Christ. He is consumed with zeal for the establishing of the universal and rightful dominion of Christ in all lands. He is restless under the fact of heathen darkness as it rests upon so many millions of the earth to-day. In this chapter the emphasis has purposely been laid upon experimental realization of redemption, because this seems required by conditions that now obtain among the vast populations of so-called Christian lands.

The theory of redemption by the atonement of Christ is theoretically accepted by multitudes who have not had what is of the most vital importance—the experimental realization of redemption. So far as experience and real knowledge are concerned, redemption has not come within the sphere of their conscious existence. This condition is both dangerous and deplorable. God has acted in Christ in their behalf, but because they have been unbelieving and neglectful he has not

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acted within the realm of their own conscious individual life. Brought up in the full blaze of gospel light, they are, nevertheless, in great darkness. The sad estate of these millions is the result of their own unwillingness to come to Christ, that they might have life. Preachers and Christians, generally, need to bear to these vast multitudes the message of God's love in redemption with a new urgency and power. Let it be laid upon their hearts that they are about to perish on account of failure to bring this glorious experience, urgently accessible, within the sphere of individual conscious experience. The wickedness of those who are holding back in hesitation and absurd unwillingness is evident when we consider that God is being robbed of service that most certainly belongs to him. The cause of God needs, and should have the support and active efforts of all gospel-enlightened people. These multitudes who are spending their money for that which is not bread are delaying the day of the ultimate victory of Christianity throughout the world, while, at the same time, they are imperiling their own souls. They are feeding on the husks of life, when they might be feeding on the very bread of

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God at the Father's table. What we need to-day is that the millions of Christendom shall come under the power of redemption, as experimentally realized. This will mean the consecration of the vast resources of civilization to the different forms of Christian service. It will put into the treasuries of the missionary societies the money necessary for a general forward movement in the Christ-ordered project of world evangelization. "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power."

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN REDEMPTION—CONCLUDED.

“But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses” (Eph. 2:4, 5).

“Not what I am, O Lord, but what thou art!
That, that alone can be my soul’s true rest;
Thy love, not mine, bids fear and doubt depart,
And stills the tempest of my tossing breast.

“Thy name is Love! I hear it from yon cross;
Thy name is Love! I read it in yon tomb;
All meaner love is perishable dross,
But this shall light me through time’s thickest gloom.

“It blesses now, and shall forever bless;
It saves me now, and shall forever save;
It holds me up in days of helplessness;
It bears me safely o’er each swelling wave.

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“Girt with the love of God on every side,
Breathing that love as heaven’s own healing air,
I work or wait, still following my guide,
Braving each foe, escaping every snare.

“T is what I know of thee, my Lord and God,
That fills my soul with peace, my lips with song;
Thou art my health, my joy, my staff and rod;
Leaning on thee, in weakness I am strong.

“I am all want and hunger; this faint heart
Pines for a fullness which it finds not here;
Dear ones are leaving, and, as they depart,
Make more room within for something yet more dear.

“More of thyself, oh, show me hour by hour!
More of thy glory, O my God and Lord!
More of thyself in all thy grace and power!
More of thy love and truth, incarnate Word!”

THE movement of God toward a lost race for its redemption was prompted by infinite compassion and love. He needed not us to add to his own glory. He abode alone in a glory unapproachable, yet his compassion moved him to our salvation. The love of God at work in human redemption is a most entrancing theme, and appeals to our deepest emotions of gratitude and praise. The redemption of a guilty world was a conception worthy of Deity. Who or what may serve as the ransom in such a transaction? This transaction is not a mere act of rescue, such as would liberate a slave. It is that, and more. It is not alone the

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case of a debtor who, after much pleading, is forgiven and set free by his creditor. It is that, and more. It is deliverance from the thraldom of Satan; it is something bought back; it is rescue by a ransom price paid. In view of such love and such consequent redemption, we may well sing:

“Jesus paid it all,
All to him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow.”

Christ was the ransom price delivered upon Calvary on account of a lost race. He was the full discharge of all that was due to the law and the righteousness of God. As Bishop Wilson puts it: “Christ is the daysman coming between the offended majesty of heaven and us, and making a perfect satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf. Christ hath in this manner, and in no other ‘redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.’ ”

It is related of a gentleman who visited a slave market that he was deeply moved at the sight of a delicate girl slave who stood in awful dread of cruel and unknown ownership. He paid the price named by her owner, and, placing the bill of sale in the slave’s hands, told her to go her way and

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enjoy her freedom. In her inexpressible gladness, she could only beg that she might be the servant of her deliverer forever. This incident but faintly illustrates the glorious power of redeeming love as manifested in Jesus Christ. With infinite gladness do the redeemed ones become the slaves of the Christ. The redeeming power of God's love is the most potent influence brought to bear upon the human heart.

God's redeeming love is potent in bringing the human mind to its most praiseworthy qualities. The reverential and appreciative approach of the human mind to the solicitations of the divine love lays the basis for the most glorious transformations of human character. The poor publican was in such an exercise of the mind when his simple prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," brought out one of the few commendations of the Saviour. The publican's heart was moving toward redeeming love in the feeling of profound unworthiness. His self-abasement pleased the Saviour. This is the becoming attitude for the human mind and heart in the presence of the unfathomable love of God. Christ is never rightly revealed except through a sense of sin. Granted this realization,

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and Jesus stands before the soul like the sun when the clouds are passed. Or, better still, he stands out before the consciousness like the landscape under the sunlight.

God is great in creation, but he is equally great in redemption, for in redemption he especially shows forth his great love. Love and forgiveness break the hard heart. Love and mercy save the penitent. A Pharisee entertained Jesus, Nicodemus came to him for an interview, but we are not certain that they opened their hearts to make Jesus King and Lord. The woman who was a sinner, who tearfully anointed the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair, gave to Jesus the entertainment he most craved. To her vision there was no question as to the divineness of Jesus. The penitent sinner had found the redeeming Saviour. She poured forth her richest ointment and bestowed her most loving kiss in deepest gratitude. Nothing too good or too precious for Jesus now. Thus it is ever when the soul has tasted the love of God in redemption. The result is the glad consecration of all that has value and that may be utilized as an offering to the Christ.

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The Pharisee looked upon the woman as an intruder who had bestowed a doubtful honor and cast a shadow upon his guest. As God and the angels viewed the scene, they saw a penitent renouncing her sin, expressing costly and sincere gratitude to her Saviour, and rejoicing with joy unspeakable in the pardoning love of God. The proud Pharisee pronounced his condemnation of the woman at the moment when the great Judge of all was pronouncing her absolution. God's love in the redeeming Christ reveals the fact that the Saviour is ready to be related to sinners. After all, it was not so much a wonder that Jesus should receive the tribute of the penitent woman as that he should be a guest at the table of the Pharisee. What fearful mistakes are made by the blinded and prejudiced human heart!

The love of God begets love in the souls of men. The love we bear to Christ is in proportion to our realization of redemption. The enlightened world to-day greatly needs a fresh and conscious realization of the love of God in redemption. This will afford a mighty motive for meeting the more than ever world-wide obligations of those who have the light of the precious gospel of Jesus the Christ.

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Shame on us if we have ever called in question the fact of the race's absolute and urgent need of this gospel of the divine love! Shame on us for our half-hearted efforts in its propagation! Did not the descent of a shower of tongues of fire at Pentecost indicate that this gospel was to set aflame the hearts of the disciples of all ages? Are our hearts to-day aflame? If not, why not? Is not the cause worthy? Is not the world in need of an earnest Christianity? Is not the responsibility of this generation in excess of that of any former generation? Is there not a manifest need of a new baptism of fire upon the church of to-day? Ought not our pulpits flame anew with the urgency of the love of God? Ought not the realization of the divine love lead the church to a new dedication of money and all possible agency and resource for the speedy evangelization of the world? Is there not need of a holy fermentation throughout the vast populations of Christendom with a view to eradicating the evil, conserving the good, doing away with dangerous stagnation, and assimilating all that is savable into the kingdom of God? Is there not need of new inspiration and movement throughout the church of to-day?

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVE OF GOD AS SHOWN IN THE INCARNATION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I. John 4:9, 10).

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (I. John 3:16).

“For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in his life” (Rom. 5:10).

THROUGHOUT the centuries the advance of the race has come by the incarnations of God. The incarnation of Jesus was manifestly the crowning

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consummation of the love of God. God thought of the world in loving compassion, and the coming of Christ in human form was the result. It is a commonly accepted theory that all bodies are but so many expressions of thought. Because man is environed with a body and related through his sensibilities to his environment beyond his own body, the incarnation of Jesus is manifestly helpful. Man is always helped by goodness in a concrete form. Hence it is that God is able to work through the personality of good men and women. Our bodies serve to disguise, as well as reveal us. The race may not yet be classified with transparent creaturehood. James speaks of two-souled men, and daily experience proves the truthfulness of his reference. The helpfulness of the incarnation of Jesus is on account of the use to which he put the incarnation. The incarnation veiled the divine glory as well as revealed it. The goodness of Jesus was a transparent goodness. He never acted a part. He was always genuinely and truly good. The days of our earthly pilgrimage put a test upon human character because, being the days of our earthly incarnation, they call for acts, for conduct, and compel resultant character. Good

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character is known and demonstrated by its becoming incarnate. We do not see how the character of God could be known save through the incarnation of Jesus.

What Jesus did and said during his earthly career demonstrates the fact that he was Deity incarnate. God proposed to reach the race through the incarnation of his well-beloved Son, and he is still proposing to reach the world through those who have become his sons through the grace brought to men in the person of Jesus. Even human love must come to us in visible form, on account of our peculiar constitution. It was also necessary that God's love come to the race in visible form. The incarnation of Jesus was not a detached incident in the development of the relations sought between God as Creator and man as creature. It was in perfect harmony with the progressive chain of divine providence. The incarnation was the cumulation of numberless processes in a single mighty manifestation. It was a lifting up of the little hills into a great mount of blessing and illumination. It was the concentration of the light into a glorious luminary that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Other incar-

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nations were like the moon and the stars, while the incarnation of Jesus was like the rising of the glorious king of day. Electric light, starlight, moonlight, are only feeble reflections of the sun-light. Thank God that out of his infinite love he hath set, in the otherwise darkened heavens of the race, the glorious light of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ.

Joseph Parker says: "Not only was the incarnation of our Lord the best possible method of coming into the human race, but the only method of doing so; and this I undertake to show on the ground of natural reason itself. God could not come into any common man as he came into Christ without first destroying that man's identity, altering the center and the weight of that man's responsibility, and placing that man in a totally false relation to every other member of the human race. The incarnation of God in Christ, exactly as it is stated in the gospel alone, fills my imagination and satisfies my reason in its sternest moods. Coming as Christ did into the world, begotten by the Holy Ghost, conceived of the Virgin Mary, made like unto us, yet without sin, it becomes a mystery, indeed, but a mystery before which our

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reason uncovers its head and bows down in lowly wonder and worship. As it is, I can say, Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; but upon any other theory I should say, Great is the injustice of godliness; a common man is chosen and purified as a vessel of God, whilst other men are left to be touched by his inferior ministry."

"I love thee, O my God ! but not
For what I hope thereby,
Nor yet because who love thee not
Must die eternally.
I love thee, O my God ; and still
I ever will love thee,
Solely because my God thou art,
Who first has loved me.

"For me, to lowest depths of woe
Thou didst thyself abase ;
For me didst bear the cross, the shame,
And manifold disgrace ;
For me didst suffer pains unknown,
Blood, sweat, and agony ;
Yea, death itself, all, all for me !
For me, thine enemy !

"Then shall I not, O Saviour, mine,
Shall I not love thee well?
Not with the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell ;
Not with the hope of earning aught,
Nor seeking a reward,
But freely, fully, as thyself
Hast loved me, O Lord."

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The cross is the highest expression of the love of God to man. All of the Christ-life was an expression of love, but for a number of reasons the cross bears the most convincing testimony to the divine affection for, and estimate of the human family. The cross was much more than a Roman gallows. It told out the divine purpose to give to erring man the opportunity to return to God. Its ruggedness was girdled with a halo of mercy and love. Since Jesus died upon the cross, let no despairing sinner fail of the divine deliverance. God is in pursuit of a perishing race, and he will not stop short of his quest. Calvary tells of wrath against sin, but love for the sinner. Its wordless appeal has curbed and subdued the heart of a rebellious race. In its presence men uncover their heads and their hearts. All men cry out, "For me he died! for me!" Men make the cross their plea as they approach to God, and the plea is effective in the highest degree. Self-accusing, guilty men look upon the cross and say, "I ask no more, for I now know that God loves me." "Like as a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him," has been pronounced the key of the cross. Salvation is not conditioned upon

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intellectual capacity, but upon “a broken and a contrite heart.” O preacher of the everlasting gospel, the world needs this message of the cross today from a heart all aglow with its sweet power.

How can there be about us the least vestige of indifference or unreality when we are to carry the very heart of God to perishing men? But listen, for there have fallen upon the ear of a sorrowing world the words of an infinite comfort. It is the outburst of the divine love for those who confront the open grave at the end of a brief pilgrimage on the earth. It is a message for those who often wonder because they abide not on the earth as long as do many inanimate objects; who wonder because their loving, helpful friends are removed when the mountains remain. Jesus, by his resurrection, has given the race a new view of death, such a view as should drive forever from our hearts all of the pagan notions that have dared to make us unworthy of the risen and glorified Saviour. Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” “If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND HUMAN CHASTISEMENT.

“For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth ; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Prov. 3: 12).

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb. 12: 6).

“Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Ps. 42: 8).

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not” (Lam. 3: 22).

IT is the triumph of faith and grace that enables the human soul to rely unceasingly upon the infinite and superior wisdom and goodness of God. Resignation in the midst of circumstances and

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providences that seem on their face to be adverse and forbidding is a condition of the mind which yields a mine of joy. Paul referred to this when he said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This rest in the love and goodness of God is not always easy for our questioning hearts. We cannot always see the mercy and goodness that is veiled by appearances. The vapors that interpose between our eyes and the sun give to the sun its apparently varying colors. In reality the great luminary abides in his unchanging glory. It is only the intervening mists that lead us at times to be deceived by some other thought. The Bible gives one characteristic and all-containing definition of God, when it declares that "God is love." Let our minds gather about this great declaration for a little time, that something of its glorious richness may come upon us. Is it not true that God possesses in his love all thinkable perfections? Systematic theology has given us a carefully classified list of the attributes of God, but Saint John goes to the heart of the whole matter in the single declaration, "God is love." Are not all the perfections of God but so many manifestations of his love?

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“Drink, child, thy Father’s love shall make the unsought draught

Sweet to thy soul, though bitter to thy lips.

Think how for thee thy sinless Elder Brother quaffed

The cup thou filledst, beneath my love’s eclipse.

“Ah, Father! whatso’er thy children truly need

Thou givest, not whatever they implore;

And oft we, grieving, think thy mercy gives no heed

To our rash pleadings, when our hearts are sore.

“But when the long sad lesson we have learned at length,

And with unmurmuring meekness we receive

The cup, whose bitter draught gives new and mighty strength,

We own thy wise true love, and no more grieve,

“But rest in patient hope, although thou long withhold

The chalice. Death and life brimmed, chrismal seal

Of conquest at whose touch the pearly gates unfold,

And heaven’s high glories to the soul reveal.

“We only wait as minors till the glad birthday

Shall crown us kings before our Father’s throne.

As princely exiles here we struggle, toil, and pray,

With eyes by watching very weary grown.

“For comfortless, aye, orphaned, thou dost never make

Thy children. Trusting hearts are kept in peace;

And when our night-time comes, thou ’lt bid us sleep; to wake

Where every sob is hushed and sorrows cease.”

There appeared before the vision of Saint John the numberless multitude of heaven, those of the white robes and the palms. His inquiry was, “Whence came they?” Promptly the answer came, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them

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white in the blood of the Lamb." These were brought to the final and the triumphant life through an earthly pilgrimage that was fraught with sorrows, disappointments, and harrowing uncertainties. These have arisen from that which was false and fleeting, to the eternal and abiding. Out of protracted struggles they have come to the reward of faith and sympathy. Their chastisements, together with the loving ministry of the divine Spirit, have purified, as do the furnace fires. Delivered, crowned, and safe at home at last!

Untouched of chastisements and divine grace, we are like stones in the quarry. Grace, received more eagerly and thoroughly under chastisement than without it, serves like the giant explosive and the chisel in fitting the stones for exalted and noble uses. It is the plan of God to make of us living stones for the building of the spiritual temple which is slowly arising through a redeemed humanity. The great Quarry Master has his eye upon us, though the dust, noise, and friction of the quarry is sometimes so distracting and distressing that we are tempted to believe we are quite forgotten of him. It is never so, for he watcheth over us ever.

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“Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb. 12:7). Chastisement is one of the evidences of our sonship in the divine family. It has been said that we may well question our sonship if our chastenings are small and infrequent. There was raging fever and attendant anxiety in the home of Saint Peter, though he was called to be an apostle. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” Referring to this affliction in the home of Peter, Joseph Parker says: “Who would not have spared the senior disciple? Who would not have made him the focal point on which should have converged all the rays of the divine approbation, so that he might have been like a light seen afar, blazing forth the excellence of the divine election? The thief that lived next door had less fever in his house than Peter had. Sometimes the bad man’s grounds bring forth plentifully, sometimes the pampered and overfed Dives has wealth upon wealth, while the praying soul is outside with dogs for his companions and crumbs as his portion. All this cannot be reconciled within the narrow

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limits of time. We want more field; the line that appears to be straight is only apparently straight, because of the limited points within which it is drawn. Extend the line, and it partakes of the shape of the world upon whose surface it is drawn. So within these narrow points of time, the rocking cradle and the deep tomb, there is not scope enough to reconcile all the divine purposes and actions and mysteries; we need more field, an ampler horizon. We shall get it by and by, and then we shall know how God has been dealing with us in forcing rivers out of our eyes and in making our heads a burning pain. O child of God, much praying man, wearied, almost, with crying at heaven's gate, proceed, persevere; the sigh of thy weakness shall be mightier far than the thunder of thy strength."

Chastisement is a test upon character. Under this test, we often are brought to see how superficial and inadequate has been the surrender of our wills to God. Under such test we are sure to discover as to the purity of our motives, along with many other features of self-revelation that have great value in our approach to the divine requirements. In all the rugged discipline of life, God

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has in view our reaching the divine likeness, the perfected Christian character. Chastening should not, therefore, be regarded as punitive, but educational. It is the now inscrutable method of love for our development. Its wisdom and beneficence will appear in God's good time. All the riddles shall be solved, and the Gordian knots shall be cut. Only let us patiently bide the time.

Chastisement often serves to bring us to God and to secure our obedience. The divine love is at work in our behalf, therefore we ought to meet chastisement in a noble serenity and an unquestioning resignation. This is, indeed, a great triumph in one's character, and it is worth all the struggle through which we must often pass in obtaining it. It should be borne in mind that the shadows of chastisement fall everywhere. In the case of the sinner who persists in his rebellion against God and the divine order, what was intended to be the chastisement of love becomes self-entailed and often galling punishment. This attitude of rebellion makes one the servant of sin and Satan. It brings one under the yoke that is not easy and the burden which is not light.

In certain diseases, the only sure remedy is con-

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stitutional treatment. This is the kind which God proposes by regeneration and chastisement to administer in our behalf. It is the only effective treatment for our depraved and kinky natures. When taken according to divine direction, it is manifest in the surrendered will, in the purification of motive and affection, in superior and well-governed temper, and in a general realization of the divine conception of character. The persistently rebellious man gets, in lieu of the gracious chastisements of the divine Father, the merciless lashes of the devil. Which shall we take? Shall we not all choose God's loving chastisements in preference to the merciless tortures of Satan? Instead of being treated by the rod, God's plan is to lead us by the shepherd's crook. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." Set opposite all the chastisements of life is the "afterward" of the God who is love, and if we are patient in well-doing we shall have the joy of his interpretation of the great word.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE CALAMITIES OF LIFE.

“Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee because the Lord thy God loved thee” (Deut. 23: 5).

MAN is in no respect owner or proprietor in the present state and order of life. He is constantly resisting, forgetting, or denying this fact, but always to his own hurt. His resistance is as irrational, and counts for as much as the baying of a dog at the moon, and as wise as the man who, taking his place in front of a flying railway locomotive, proceeded to defy it and oppose it. Calamities, as we are wont to speak, are such visitations as are beyond the control of man. Fire, flood, volcanic eruptions, pestilence, death, and all destructive manifestations of the elements of nature, according to the usual methods of thinking, are

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in the category. After all, the word “calamity” is a sort of pagan word. It was not begotten by the Christian faith, nor does it apply to the Christian character as to anything beyond human control.

Those manifestations that are beyond the control of man are under the control of God or Satan. That Satan does exert a limited malignant power in the present order, we have no doubt; but even this limited power is being slowly and surely circumvented. The love of God is responsible for this circumvention, and in the end the triumph will be complete. In the economy of God, limited satanic influence serves as a discipline and a test. It is not irresistible in so far as moral character and influence are concerned, for we hear it said, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Concerning the provision made by the divine love for victory over the devil, we hear it said, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.” So there is no doubt of the ultimate triumph of love. If in the present order Satan shall, by any temporary power, inflict suffering or administer destruction through the elements upon the children of men,

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be it known that through the redeeming love God stands ready to turn the curse into a blessing. It follows, therefore, that to the child of God any such thing as a calamity is impossible. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever" in safety.

There was every appearance of calamity in the death of our beloved President McKinley, and there can be no doubt that his murderer intended it to be a calamity; but we have lived long enough this side of the sad event to witness the good that has come out of the awful tragedy. God would not hearken unto the wish of the murderer of our President, but he has turned his sad death into a blessing to the nation, because of his great love to our nation. The real calamity connected with the whole affair was the calamity that came because the murderer of the President wilfully consented to be the instrument of the devil in the act of murder, and in that the man with a heart so vile and impenitent fell under the self-invited judgment of God. The greatest calamity possible in this life is the calamity of an ungodly and an impenitent character, and for this man himself is responsible.

Ever and anon we are shocked at some great

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catastrophe like the recent outburst of Mount Pelee, when thousands are suddenly swept into eternity. But let us consider that, as to those who were thus suddenly removed, none were taken to whom the mere continuance of the earthly life would have meant transformation of character on account of such continued existence. Judging by every possible analogy, and by what we observe as to the government of God, this is a fair and legitimate inference. To the rest of the race, what are the lessons of such a visitation? First, that God is the sole proprietor of the earth, and that we occupy it only by his sufferance. So there will be no filing of bills of indemnity and no suits to recover for the property losses. No earthly court would presume to hear any argument in behalf of such a claim. Here is a lesson that the world needs to have taught it again and again. Men and nations go on with their accumulations of property, and make use of it, wholly without regard to the claims of God. Millions upon millions are accumulated and hoarded, as if men were in no sense responsible to the world's need, and the cry of the unevangelized world is drowned in the excesses of luxurious living. In some way or

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other men must be made to see that God alone is proprietor. Devastating floods and consuming fires are so many reminders that there are unseen forces that must be reckoned with in the world of commerce. The people sometimes hear the voice of God in connection with a great drought or famine as they would not at any other time. If men were more ready to recognize the proprietorship of the Almighty, we have every reason to believe that the number of calamitous visitations would be much fewer. God's claims upon the wealth and world that are his by creation must be heard.

Such a visitation as that which has just been witnessed in the West Indies serves to quicken our appreciation of the manifold blessings which we enjoy in the absence of such visitation. Our fertile plains, our teeming and placid rivers, our fruitful valleys, our verdure-crowned mountains and hills, never seemed so lovely and beautiful as now. These scenes are the rule of God's love and beneficence, while those of the bursting volcano are the exception. Oh, that from our heart of hearts we might praise and adore the God of love, who gives us so much of blessing and permits but little of the curse to fall! Oh, that our praise

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might not be a matter of mere sentiment, empty of fruit, but a deep and abiding conviction that shall constantly prove itself in the demonstration of our stewardship; “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,” and at most we shall shortly have need of but enough to cover our dust. God’s uniform method of turning a curse into a blessing is a most convincing demonstration of his love. Ultimately all the curse shall have passed away. Until that time let us comfort ourselves in that, if we but lovingly seek to obey God and serve him, ere any so-called calamity shall overtake us, God shall turn it into a blessing.

We are usually much affected at the sight of physical suffering, and are in constant dread of it ourselves. Let it be noted with regard to all physical suffering, that it is more apparent than real. As a rule, and most likely without exception, death itself is painless, and need not be dreaded at all. God has so ordered all physical being that beyond a certain point suffering of the body is not, save in appearance only. When we are in readiness, as is our privilege and duty, death is a blessing in disguise. God’s loving ministry, by which he turns the curse into a blessing, is all-

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pervasive. Even physical monstrosities frequently serve to quicken our appreciation of physical perfection.

Suffer here a quotation from De Sales: "He died for all because all were dead, and his mercy was more salutary to buy back the race of men than Adam's misery was to ruin it. Indeed, Adam's sin was so far from overwhelming the divine benignity that, on the contrary, it excited and provoked it. So that by a most sweet and a most loving reaction and struggle, it received vigor from its adversary's presence, and, as if recollecting its forces for victory, it made grace to superabound where sin had abounded. Whence the holy church, by a pious excess of admiration, cries out on Easter eve: 'O truly necessary sin of Adam which was blotted out by the death of Jesus Christ! O blessed fault which merited to have such and so great a Redeemer!' Truly we may say as did he of old, 'We were ruined had we not been undone'; that is, ruin brought us profit, since in effect human nature has received more graces by its Saviour redeeming than ever it would by Adam's innocence, if he had persevered therein. For though the divine Providence has left in man

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deep marks of his severity, yea, even amid the very grace of his mercy, as, for example, the necessity of dying, disease, labors, the rebellion of sensuality, yet the divine favor, floating as it were over all this, takes pleasure in turning these miseries to the greater profit of those who love him, making patience spring from labors, contempt of the world from the necessity of death, a thousand victories from out of concupiscence; and, as the rainbow touching the thorn aspalathus makes it more odoriferous than the lily, so our Saviour's redemption touching our miseries makes them more beneficial and worthy of love than original innocence could ever have been. The state of redemption is a hundred times better than that of innocence. Verily, by the watering of our Saviour's blood, made with the hyssop of the cross, we have been replaced in a whiteness incomparably more excellent than the snow of innocence. We come out, like Naaman, from the stream of salvation more pure and clean than if we had never been leprous, to the end that the Divine Majesty, as he has ordained also for us, should not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good, that mercy should keep itself above judgment, and his

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tender mercies be over all his works.” The thorn would not naturally be classed among perfume-giving plants, as is the lily, but rain and rainbow work a miracle of transformation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE EVANGELICAL APPEAL.

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4).

“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3).

“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love” (Hos. 11:4).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44).

THE gospel of Christ is the gospel of gracious appeal. It is addressed to a race that by nature is apt to lose sight of God. This not because they are unconscious of a need of him, but because they are possessed of a nature that frequently permits some other object to displace him in the affection

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and service of life. However, God knew all about the nature of man when he decided on his redemption. From the beginning the divine love has sought the recovery of man the creature, to the fellowship and communion of God the Creator. Inasmuch as God knows thoroughly the great deep of the human heart, the encouragement which he holds out for return to him should ever be accepted with the fullest confidence and most grateful appreciation. The divine love for man is therefore the basis of gospel persuasion. This is the message which Christ came to illustrate and amplify. It is the message which the church is to bear to the race in every age. Having been enlightened as to the certainty of the divine compassion, it becomes our duty to transmit this persuasion from generation to generation. This has been done as to those portions of the world's population that have lived under the illuminations of the Christian gospel.

Because of what divine love has done for those who have felt the thrill of its marvelous power, there must ever come upon all its recipients an ever-deepening sense of obligation to propagate this gracious gospel until the earth shall be full

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of it. Just what the divine love has done for us is well illustrated by Aristotle's footless birds. It is said of these birds that, being without feet, their only safety was in unbroken flight. For this they were well-fitted. If, perchance, they were so unfortunate as to fall to the ground, they remained helpless, and, by their exposure, soon came to their death. One hope only remained, and that was that some kind hand should lift them into the air and start them on their flight, or that some strong gale of wind should reach them and give them sufficient momentum so that they might, by dint of effort, recover their poise in the air and return to a condition of safety. The love of God takes up the race, and by the breath of his compassion renews in us those powers of heavenly poise and flight. The human will consenting in penitence to recognize and receive the love of God, opens a door by which enters the gracious and saving Christ. That the human will should sometimes be stubborn and rebellious against divine love is at once a misfortune and a wonder. Why should we not recognize the divine friendship? Why should we not consent to the divine mercy? Why should we not shelter in the divine compas-

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sion? Why should we not willingly receive the hand extended to help? Does our sense of unworthiness hinder? Then we should remember that a sense of unworthiness is the best possible commendation to the divine love.

The love of God awakens us by making us conscious of the divine solicitude. It excites within us the flame of exalted desire for likeness to God in the possession of holy and exalted virtues. It excites our desires for the eternal, for the infinite, for the abiding, for the spiritual. What greater mistake can we make than that we deny to God's love our heartiest coöperation? This divine love is ever operating in our behalf. It is unflagging and tireless in its tender ministry upon the mind. It touches as by angelic visitation our dormant natures. It operates for our quickening, for our recovery to the divine life and communion. It operates with a view to satisfying within us in this present life those indefinable outgoings of our hearts toward the infinite. It bids us lift up our hearts in faith and love toward God as the source of all power. With such a ministration of the divine to the human, nothing less can reasonably

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be expected than man's consent and abandonment to the infinite love.

It is only natural to suppose that the human heart shall arise in response to the love of God and girt itself about with the strength that comes as a result of having decided that, cost what it may, the response to the divine love shall at once be made. We can think of no greater source of power for human life and character than that it shall abide in the will of God as its vital center. The heavenly bodies are held to their spheres by what has been called the law of attraction. Under this law they gravitate about some powerful center. If any of these bodies shall, by any interference, deflect from their sphere of gravitation, the result is wreck and loss. So when a human heart drifts from its anchorage in the love of God, it is face to face with immeasurable danger. From this anchorage in the divine love, we should see to it that no combination of influences shall ever drive us.

The mother acts promptly on hearing the cry of her helpless offspring. She is not always able to give help. Her child may reach conditions where her ministry is unavailable. On the other hand,

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God has infinite power to help his children. If there be but the breathing of the most feeble sigh or desire for him, there is hope. He awaits in constant solicitude the breath of humblest prayer, to the intent that he may come with helpful ministry. This uplifting of the human heart in even a feeble desire for God is the starting-point and the resting-place of God's love. From this point of contact, divine influence multiplies and the human soul receives. With this feeble desire as a starting-point, the soul may be put in a very flame of passion for the divine. The heart more and more cries out for the living God. God's love works on a sigh. The human heart often prays when its prayer is an unconscious act. There is infinite hopefulness for the children of men on account of God's love. What an appeal is here for the church, for her ministers, for her members. How in a very baptism of joyfulness we should arise to herald such an appeal across the dreary wastes of godless lives. God's love prompts his compassion. It begets that divine solicitude which seeks the salvation of men. God is anxious that all men come to him. He willeth not the death of any, but the rather that all should turn to him and live. God's

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love is the summer of heaven realized in human hearts; it brings the everlasting summer of the soul here and now. When once realized, its recipient is restless in desire that it be carried to all the world. When we know that our loving God is ready to put his breath upon any single good or religious aspiration, we can with hope and expectation appeal to our fellow-men in behalf of this, the best news that mortals may ever hear. This side of final doom the sinner needs all of Calvary, and Calvary is all for him. Salvation is by divine love and sacrifice.

The evangelical appeal is associated with all biblical teaching. From Genesis to Revelation this appeal glows like the radiance of a summer sunset. Yea, rather, it glows like the coming of the morning when the night is far spent. Assured by divine love, comforted in our own salvation, be it remembered that the gospel of Jesus Christ will prevail over sin. Sin is to be forever disassociated with the human family. The process of redemption shall, some sweet day, reach its last stage of advance. There shall come the final, the unbroken victory of the divine compassion over human obduracy.

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God addresses his own mighty love to the building again of all shattered strength; the restoration of all beauty that may have been erased. Where sin has abounded and destroyed the divine likeness, putting good name and character under eclipse, the almighty love of God can yet restore the lost lineaments of beauty. Whoso publisheth this gospel of redeeming love is moving in the direction of the divine intent. God has set his heart upon the salvation of the world. He spared not his own Son, that the work might be victoriously consummated. He lays hold upon all types and varieties of dedicated personality, in order that by all sorts of agencies and ministries the controlling movement of our generation may be in the direction of this his holy purpose. With what glad abandonment shall we give ourselves to this royal proclamation. How shall we hasten to pass the good news to the one who may be standing next to us, and then, uniting heart to heart, offering to offering, service to service, contribute to the speedy publication of this divine love in the ear of every wandering and erring son of man.

Let us be cheered in the thought that we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a

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feeling of our infirmities. He knows them, he feels them, but he loves us still. Our broken and contrite hearts find in him always a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. We may safely cast all our care upon him, for he careth for us. This evangelical love, tenderness, and hopefulness appeals to the universal heart of the race. It is the divine answer to the sad heart's cry in every zone, under every government. Effort in obedience to this divine love, and its publication, brings one in touch with evangelical power. Hence appeal, hence call for decision, surrender, action, now. God alone can recreate the soul. Man cannot make whole a broken vase, but God can save his wandering child.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE UNEVANGELIZED WORLD.

“Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deut. 10:19).

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 19:19).

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:36, 37).

“And the Lord made you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (I. Thes. 3:12).

THERE is a pathetic reasonableness in the proposition that the love of God, so saving, comforting,

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helpful, and free, shall be heralded to the ear of the entire population of the globe within the present generation. The heathen world is sadder than we know. There is a sadness everywhere. Turn to the right or to the left in our own beloved land, and we find the evidences of human sorrow; but when we consider the infinite ministry of comfort on account of assurance, immortality, and eternal life, as we know it in Jesus Christ, we can readily imagine what must be the condition of the world that is a stranger to all this divine comfort. The appeal of eight hundred millions of the world's population, who are related by the ties of universal kinship to those of us who have been enlightened in the gospel, must ever be regarded as tender and pathetic. Who of us ever entered into their world and sat down by their cheerless hearth-stone and tried to appreciate the weird loneliness of a life without knowledge of God? Who of us, in imagination, ever put ourselves in their stead, until we could feel the thick darkness that must ever surround the life that has not felt the touch of the Christ? We can think of nothing that must so thoroughly appeal to the heart of the enlightened man or woman who has even a slight measure

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of human tenderness as this vast multitude who wander on aimless, solitary, and comfortless, waiting the end of life without a ray of hope. When we stop to consider the light that has fallen across our pathway, are we not constrained by the tenderer impulses of our natures to raise the question, whether the enlightened people of this generation are enlisted as they should be for the telling of the love of God throughout the world?

Ours is a double danger: First, the danger of sinning against the light, that becomes almost blinding in its fullness when we sin against it. Then the failure to rise up as the sons of light and project it upon the darkness that belts the globe to-day. Failure here will be the invitation of our own doom, the coming of our own destruction. Many mighty works were done by Christ in certain cities of the Holy Land, which, if they had been done in other cities, would have brought the people to deepest repentance. It is, therefore, a serious question as to what we owe the world—we in America, in Great Britain, and elsewhere, where the gospel has been the inheritance of the centuries. There is a debt here more all-commanding, more all-searching than many know.

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It is an infinite honor that Christ has tarried in our homes and spoken in loving ministry to our lives. No land or no individual can ever be the same after Christ has been in the midst. How intolerable our guilt, if we shall, from the exalted altitude where our privileges have carried us, be remiss and indifferent in the recognition of the obligations that we owe to millions that have not heard of the Christ. The Christian world adds to its already fabulous wealth each year by almost countless millions. Our colleges and schools, with our churches, are giving to the world an army of splendid personalities, who may become the agents of transmitting the knowledge of Christ from the centers of Christian influence and power to the remotest rim of the world's population. The light, the life, the intelligence of Christendom is congested in its great centers, whereas if it were properly diffused, it would illuminate all the dark, neglected places of the earth, within the present generation.

Since we have reason to believe that the grace of God in Jesus Christ is a fundamental element, not only in individual character-building, but in bringing the family of man into those relations

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and associations that foster his highest good and guarantee his hopeful progress, how reasonable it is to expect that we should regard the duty of evangelizing the world as the great overmastering issue of the hour and of the age.

We have often tried to imagine the kind of impression that is strongest in the heathen world, touching the lands that are embraced in so-called Christendom. Some of these from afar who have visited our shores testify to the wonder and admiration created by the appliances and products of our complex civilization. They are impressed with our great cities, the buildings of which tower skyward to a dizzy height. They are impressed with our railways that bind the continent with bands of steel. They are impressed with our wealth and the luxuries which, on account of our wealth, are the common possession of our favored people. All of these impressions, however, are but superficial. They do not touch the heart of the world's greatest need. Material prosperity, material development, are good in their place, but back of them all, underneath them all, is the infinite potency of our spiritual life. Though our civilization must make apology for various ex-

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crescences that belong not to the heart of it, it nevertheless is true that our Occidental civilization is built upon a great fundamental and all-supporting element, which may be defined as Christian conscience and Christian character. Christian character holds up and makes possible the confidence of the world in our commercial transactions. It makes strong our leadership in church and state. It begets the ever-rising ideals of our social, ecclesiastical, and civic life. It is this that underlies our civilization which the heathen world most needs to-day. So that, hand in hand with our approaches for commerce, with all sorts of instruction and information, must go the more subtle and the more potent touch of that divine influence which begets spiritual and Christlike character in the children of men. In short, the tremendous power of our Christian civilization should not only arouse the wonder and admiration of heathen peoples, but also lead them to penitence for individual spiritual deformity. We must make them conscious, by holding up before them the mirror of the gospel, of those divine conceptions of life and character which, when wrought out in parental love and life, not only create the

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home, but envelop it in the atmosphere of redemptive constructiveness.

Illuminated life was never as responsible as now. The reasons are abundant and self-evident. The general advancement of the world is such that it stands in relationships so intricate, so interwoven, as to bind it into a oneness of destiny, progress, and power. The blood that vitalizes any part of the race's organism to-day must rapidly make its way throughout the whole body. No portion of the race can claim inherent superiority over any other portion. The love of God, life under that love, in the pursuit of usefulness and happiness, are the common rights, in God's thought, for all men. To carry this ideal into the realm of actual conquest is the task of the present enlightened and Christian generation. How dare we who are the daughters and sons of light be recreant to so high and holy a trust? Do we feel tingling through every atom of our personality the thrill of an abundant desire which shall lead us to carry unto every tribe of our lost race the glorious germinal forces of the Word of God? Everywhere truth burns for publicity. It refuses to lie in a napkin. It insists on being incarnate and living out, and

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into, and through all human personality. It insists that if we have knowledge, we shall make it known to the ignorant. If we have the divine love, we shall, in deepest tenderness, publish it to those who have been strangers to it.

Paul announced himself a debtor to the barbarians, not a debtor on account of anything he had received from them, but a debtor because of what he had received from God, and they had not. His great personality had been smitten in the noonday brightness as he traveled on an errand of hate. He had been lifted up into a new life of love and hope. He had become imbued with evangelistic zeal. There was a flame in his heart that refused to be smothered. It was born to consume his life and project it with holy fervency and Christlike zeal upon the barbarians who had, in no sense, ministered to him. It is evident, therefore, that upon the shoulders of this generation there devolves a responsibility peculiarly our own; a responsibility which we need to recognize with ever-increasing keenness; a responsibility which must impel us to take up not only the black man's burden, but every man's burden, and commend it to the infinite ministries of God's love. The

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gospel of Christ applied, actually believed, and effectively carried into heathenism, will lift up the millions who dwell in degradation. Because the gospel has this power of elevation, and because in transmitting it we elevate ourselves, the highest wisdom, the most humane philanthropy, the profoundest statesmanship, all unite in prompting us to make known now the love of God throughout an unevangelized world. Let the good news be heralded, for beyond that heralding God has in store infinite progress in the ages to come.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

“And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19).

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

“But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe the mint and rue and every herb, and pass over judgment and the love of God; but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Luke 11:42).

“O Christ, thy love is mighty;
Long-suffering is thy grace;
And glorious is the splendor
That beameth from thy face.
Our hearts upleap in gladness
When we behold that love,
As we go singing onward
To dwell with thee above.”

THE love of God poured forth—oh, glorious mystery! Oh, glorious potency! Poured forth in

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gracious abundance; no stinting, no measuring, no limitation, save as imposed by the obdurate will of man. Poured forth as abundant waters over parched ground. Poured forth on account of the finished work of our Lord. Poured forth in the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Poured forth in loving persuasion to win the sinner from the way that leads to death. Poured forth in the experience of the penitent, until his joy and assurance are abounding.

The love of God poured forth *in our hearts*, what a treasure for such a receptacle! God's love for the human nature, and human nature for the love of God. God's love for the heart, and the heart for God's love. Here is union and fellowship of the sublimest order. The heart of men related to the love of God poured forth; the heart, so empty, so proud, so vain, so self-centered, so obdurate, so prone to wander from God. Into such an undeserving heart as this the love of God is poured forth, if the heart but seek for and cry unto him. Oh, miracle of love! Oh, wonder of grace! Poured forth in the heart to make it tender and sympathetic, to sanctify and steady it. Poured forth in the heart to fit it to be the ally of Christ

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in the rescue of a lost race. Poured forth in the heart to enable it to take up the burdens of others. Poured forth in the heart to illuminate it, and give it power to triumph over its own narrowness; to make it calm and trustful in time of trouble; to make it joyful in tribulation. Poured forth in the heart as its own greatest need. Poured forth in the heart, thereby making connection between the Infinite and the finite, between the Creator and the creature. Poured forth in the heart, uniting strength with weakness.

Poured forth in our hearts *through the Holy Spirit given unto us*; we are surely ascending in the climax. The love of God poured forth—in our hearts—through the Holy Spirit—given unto us. Each step in the climax points back to the finished work of the cross. All this precious experience through the Holy Spirit, a gift. In the language of Dr. Richard S. Storrs: “It is through the intimate, personal operation of the Spirit of God, by his indwelling light and grace shed abroad in the souls of them that believe, that the heart is discharged of selfishness and sin, and is filled with the holy beauty and triumph of a supreme virtue. The truth is his instrument, but only the instru-

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ment. The essential power through which this amazing change is wrought is that same energy of the Holy Ghost by which prophets and apostles were inspired, which in the Lord was ever revealed. It reaches the inmost springs of life; turns gloom to gladness, passion to peace; till the soul becomes a temple alight with love, ringing with praise, the breath of constant supplication filling it as with incensed air."

The Holy Spirit is the medium through whom the experience of the love of God is manifest. The love of God reaches our spirit through the Holy Spirit. Because Christ came, the Holy Spirit has come, and his revelation is that which the world most needs—an individual experience of the love of God. Every son and daughter of Adam's race may know the love of God experimentally. We are conscious of a universe *about* us, and should be equally conscious of God *within* us.

"Since the day I called thee mine,
Since the answer, 'I am thine,'
Sweetly have I walked between
Waters still and pastures green;
Soft thine hand upon my brow,
I the sheep,—the shepherd, thou."

The love of God in the soul begets love to God

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and to fellow-men. It may be truthfully said that every virtue of the Christian character is produced by the inflowing and abiding love of God. No sooner does the divine love flow into the heart, than straightway that heart, like good ground, begins to produce, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold, in the graces of Christian character. The love of God in the soul acts and reacts. It acts on the individual heart in assurance of pardon and salvation. It reacts outwardly in the abundant activities of the Christian life and service. God's love plays into and through the saved soul. The Christian becomes the channel through whom the divine love shines forth in the life of practical Christian ministry. This relates the love of God to all the philanthropy of the world. It relates it to all the virtues of the individual character. Obedience to the comprehensive commandments of Jesus, including full abandonment to him, is the condition on which we may abide in the love of God. Let us be careful lest we forfeit at this point, and then wonder at our loss of power for service. Our whole life must be planted in this all-important condition of successful or God-honoring service. It sometimes occurs that

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the service of one wholly abandoned to Christ is not successful as the world considers success; but, no matter, for the eye of God is on his own, and he is the final judge of all success. Any soul who opens the door to the inflowing and outflowing tides of the love of God will have a truly successful life. They never fail who submit their lives to Jesus Christ. The principle of true success, fidelity, is shown in the following lines:

“The glorious sun
Stays in his course, and plays the alchemist;
Turning, with splendor in his precious eye,
The meager, cloddy earth to glittering gold.”

The realization of the love of God is one of the sweetest experiences of the Christian life. To this fact all Christians can give testimony. Certain scriptures express the glow of the soul under this realization. “Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Ps. 86:15). “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103:8, 9). Are we in sorrow? the Lord’s compassions overflow

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toward us. Are we in temptation? God graciously comes to our aid. Do we make mistakes? he is lovingly patient. If we have sinned, God is plenteous in mercy. The love of God is for the advantage of those who put their trust in him. Spurgeon said that there are shades in the light of divine love—"compassion upon suffering, grace toward unworthiness, longsuffering to provocation, mercy toward sin, truth toward the promise." In Christian experience all the good things of the divine love become blessedly real.

The realization of the love of God causes men to have large hope for their straying fellow-men. Nothing like it to keep one from souring and withdrawing interest in his fellows. It is the only antidote for the acid that sometimes creeps into one's nature, and which is so destructive of one's good influence. We must persist ever in having large faith in men, and, as nearly as may be, in all men. As soon as we cease to love men, that moment we cease to help them. Love for men and ability to help them are always coexistent in human experience and possibility. Under our keenest realizations of the love of God to us we shall find our strongest feelings of love toward all men

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everywhere. Our own sense of unworthiness is greatest when our realization of divine love is greatest. When men have but little love for their fellow-men, and but little interest in their spiritual welfare, we must conclude that they are in no personal realization of the love of God to them.

The thorough realization of the love of God is most potent in bringing life under the principles of Christian service. Many men who are theoretically Christians are practically infidels. No man really believes anything until his whole life is dominated by his belief. The fundamental principle of Christian service, and of all profitable life, is self-sacrifice for the good of others. Any man who violates this great principle throws himself athwart the inflexible laws of all really useful living. Kindred to the principle of self-sacrifice is that of giving the kingdom of God and its promotion first place in our plans, first place in our money, and first place in our motives. This involves the complete dedication of one's self to Christ and such a life as he would have us live. The fast and full hold of these great principles on the people of the present generation is a thing greatly needed. This would work a mighty revo-

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lution in our present-day civilization and would at once project the great resources of Christendom on an unevangelized world. It would make a radical change in the treatment which many so-called Christian men give to the various appeals that come to them for the financial support of Christian enterprises of all sorts.

It is a master-stroke of Satan to lead the professed disciple of Christ to be miserly and unchristian in his support of Christian enterprises with his money. Every evil cause to-day recognizes the great power of money to promote the ends which they desire. All sorts of evil and questionable enterprises command almost unlimited sums of money, while some would-be Christians seem to look upon any appeal to their purse for Christian work as being a sort of sanctified robbery. All this needs to be changed, and the sooner the better for the world and the cause of Christ. O ye men of means, who stint God's cause, how dwelleth the love of God in you? A full realization of the divine love makes a man have pure joy in giving. The love of God in the heart means the kind of giving which Paul referred to when he said, "God loveth the hilarious giver." May God multiply

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this sort of giver in the length and breadth of Christendom, until the various appeals for God's money are not reckoned as begging for that which may be grudgingly given.

CHAPTER X.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH.

“The Lord loveth the gates of Zion” (Ps. 87: 2).

“The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:17).

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word; that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

THE church invisible is made up of those who, by the spiritual birth, have become members of God’s spiritual family. They are begotten by the Spirit through the washing of regeneration and

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the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Lord is immanent in his church. The Lord is in the midst of Zion, a mighty One who will save—a mighty One who will save in the midst of the church. What distinction is here? The church is the greatest constructive moral force in the world. It has been said of the church, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early.” The sons and daughters of the church are to come from the ends of the earth. The life of the church is to abound and take in all the peoples of the earth. Concerning the church, Isaiah says, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.”

The love of God determines the function of the church. The church exists to save. This fact calls for emphasis in every age. It is not a narrow view of the church’s function. It does indicate what should be the all-dominating conception in the mind of the church itself. This conception is broad enough to embrace all the variety of the church’s ministry and influence. This preëminent function of the church should blaze out in characters of flame over every assembly of believers.

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- ✓ God's love determines the motive of the church. This fact places the church upon an elevated plane peculiar to itself. It entails unusual responsibility, while it also guarantees unusual power. Since the motive of the church is determined by the love of God, it is self-evident that all the varied activities of the church should come under the dominance of this sublime and Christlike emotion. Seeking to save, must not alone be said of the church's Lord; it must be said of the church herself. The fact that the motive of the church is love, places it in a unique relation to all classes and types of men. Peculiar responsibilities follow, while the way is not always free from danger—danger lest through the weakness of human nature the church fall from its high estate and its exalted motive to the plane of the social club or any mere human organization. But so long as the church abides in the love of God as its indwelling power, it is safe from inherent weaknesses and potent in loving ministries. Any being or organization governed by such a motive as this will always have a certain kind of welcome to the human heart.
- ✓ God's love determines the atmosphere and

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temper of the church. The atmosphere of the world is not love, for, in good part, the world is governed by hate. This is not because there are not good people in the world, nor yet because there are not good aspirations in the hearts of those who are not living a Christian life, but because civilization, in its movements toward brotherhood, is hampered by the natural weaknesses of the race. On this account progress is slow. In the midst of this dearth of love, as characterizing the dealings of men with one another, the Lord God has set up a kingdom and established a church which, according to his order and plan, has no real life save as it lives in the atmosphere of love and sympathy. Such an atmosphere as this begets hope in the hearts of men and women who may have, for one reason or another, lost place among the ranks of those who abide in the love and will of God. It begets faith in the hearts of those who have gone far away from childhood's innocence and sweet confidence. It begets expectation of good from God on the part of those who have almost been ready to believe that God was their enemy. In the light of the foregoing it is evident that when the church, either in its ministry or laity, engages in

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any sort of effort, either aggressive or defensive, there shall be a lack of power save as there is recognition of this truth.

The love of God determines the church's capacity for service. The church, like her Lord, is in the world to serve. He that will be greatest among you, let him be servant of all. This service cannot be rendered in its multiplied forms unless there be great love in the hearts of those who serve. Perhaps in no age have such demands come upon the church as in this one. The question is often raised, whether the church has capacity and resource adequate to the tremendous demands that are made of her. But since divine love determines the church's ability for service, where shall we place the limitation? Where shall we say, Thus far and no farther? At home and abroad, everywhere and all around, are fields white to harvest. The doors are everywhere ajar, and if it were not for the omnipotence of love the church would fail, yea, the race itself would fail. As it is, if the church shall abide in this source of power, if she refuse to stop short of the fullest realizations of God's perfect love, she shall minister in abundant efficiency. She will, by her good works, stop

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the mouths of gainsayers and critics. She will lift the world upward into realms of hope and recover the race from its awful despair.

God's love assures the church's present, continuous, and ultimate triumph. The church is not to triumph for her own sake. She triumphs for the sake of men. She triumphs in the beneficent plan of God toward all men. The church's present triumph is assured because she is the exponent of the infinite love. Back of her frailties, her haltings and weaknesses, is the unfailing love of God, like a great power-house giving out in all directions the life-giving current. Judged by what we see in any passing hour, we might be tempted to say the church will fail of her mission, or beholding some evidences of love's decay, of formality where we had a right to expect spirituality, we may become discouraged. Let it, however, be remembered that over and above all human agency, and circumventing all human weakness, moves the all-conquering purposes of a loving providence toward the joyful consummation. The eddies that we note in the stream of ecclesiastical life do not indicate that the mighty stream of spiritual life and power has ceased to flow. On the contrary, first, last, and

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always let it be in our thought and faith that because of God's infinite love and grace the church is assured of present and continuous triumph. Finally, let it be said, lest our hearts sometimes grow faint, that the church is bound to win. This is as sure as the immutable promises of God. Let no distressed or downcast Christian worker ever give up to the thought that, after all, the cause of love and truth may be lost. It shall not be so. At the last, we shall find God's throne set up forever. We shall find that love and mercy have triumphed, and that the race has been restored to holiness and God.

God's love broods over the church in exultant joyfulness. "He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." This beautiful language expresses the emotion of Jehovah toward his church. Singing stands for the unspoken and unspeakable jubilee of the heart. The deepest feelings are inexpressible. As a very correct translation would give it, God is silent in his love as in unutterable delight over love's triumph. Love delights in expression, in manifestation, but in its great depth there is the indefinable, the inexpressible. Think of all this being applied to the heart

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of the Infinite One as he joys and rejoices over sinners who repent and over millions who are saved. But there is another beautiful significance here. God *silent* in his love. He might often fittingly speak and censure us for our sinfulness, but he does not even mention our sins; they have been all taken away by the provision of an infinite grace, by the sacrifice of God's beloved Son. By all the struggles of a true heart Godward they have all disappeared. God proposes to love us with a love that will mention our sins against us no more forever.

How the heart bounds with joy in view of the fact that a knowledge of God is our glorious inheritance. While the shadows hang dark and dismal over so many millions to-day, ours is the land of light. Here, speaking in every institution that touches us from the cradle to the grave, is the voice of the cross, the language of Calvary. God's love and the church,—thank Heaven, these are forever associated and interdependent. The church, defective, often slow-going, often lacking in heart and purpose, yet the object of divine compassion; borne with by his infinite sympathy and inspired to serve according to his glorious purpose. Let the

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language of the prophet thrill us as we note his beautiful words addressed to the Zion of God, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” With such infinite relationships, with such guarantees of power, with such provisions for reinforcement in service, the church ought always to stand forth with its message of persuasion and invitation. When the power of invitation shall have passed out of the heart of the church, when the urgency of appeal shall have disappeared from her class- and prayer-meetings, the world will have but little for which to hope. Through the mercy of God, we may expect that such a day will never come in the history of the church. It is the church’s exalted privilege and function to cry ever in the ears of the thoughtless multitude, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND PRAYER.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in your prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30).

GOD is love, and therefore men ought always and everywhere to pray unto him. In some form or other, all men do pray. It is not always with thought of prayer, but even wish, desire, aspiration are prayer; not in the highest or most desirable form, grant you, but prayer, nevertheless. The highest aspirations of prayer are possible only to one who has been instructed in the Bible. It follows, therefore, that a very large portion of the population of the globe are now quite apart from this most exalted and delightful privilege. We who have been enlightened by the Scriptures from our youth should test to the fullest this open door of power and blessing. God graciously invites our

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petitions for our own personal salvation and in behalf of others. No one should hesitate when the door of mercy stands ever ajar and the air is laden with sweet invitations.

All who have experienced the love of God are quite inclined to return that love by exercising the holy office of prayer in behalf of others. There is always in the world an inner circle of supplicants who are in fellowship by the love of the spirit. By the divine love which they have come to know so blessedly they are prepared to strive in prayer to God. Having learned to repose upon the love of God in all the circumstances of life, they are prompted to prayer as naturally as the child nestles in the arms of the parent when danger threatens. They are inwardly assured that God hears and answers prayer. They grow daily in this assurance, though they do not always receive the answer they expect. They rest in the persuasion that in his own wise and loving way the Father answers the most humble petition. To rest in this sweet and comforting faith is to have attained a high type of spiritual character. The life comes to abounding strength that reaches this stone in the steps heavenward. Here the soul rests, and serves

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while it rests, and all life's work is wrought in the presence of the adorable Lord. The days as they pass are doxologies, and the heart sings its song of trust through every dark way.

Striving together in prayer to God through the love of the Spirit suggests the fraternity of those who are bound together by the bonds of heaven-inspired supplication. It suggests the glorious triumph of the congregation, the assembly of believers, the companies and circles of those who are made kindred in the Lord.

The love of God forbids coldness in the church. It is the occasion of fervency and warm-heartedness. It means earnestness, intensity, enthusiasm, whole-heartedness. For the church thus imbued and empowered, it means victory and eminent efficiency in soul-winning. No mistake; if the church be thus tempered to-day it becomes, thereby, an invincible host, and will prove its potency in the salvation of the multitudes. The church is bound to conquer by love. The church is certain to triumph as it shall strive together in prayer. Prayer saves from weakness and barrenness. It empowers for fruitful service in behalf of erring humanity. It guarantees income from spiritual

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ministries of every variety. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

The praying spirit promotes the working spirit. The church or the individual that enters upon this life of intercessory prayer cannot but be abundant in labors. If we shall truly pray the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers, we shall most assuredly offer ourselves for God's service. This is always the result. No true prayer without personal dedication of one's self for the will of the loving Christ. Aggressiveness is greatly needed in all the realms of Christendom at this present hour. The enemies of righteousness are on the alert and tireless in effort. Wickedness is defiant and boastful. The hosts of God-loving and man-loving people need to stand forth in a new aggressiveness that shall thrill the world with its very daring. This is the age for great plans touching the extension of the kingdom of God and great dedications of persons and resources so that great plans may be carried out. No weakling should be at the front in any department of Christian activity. It is the hour for brave and large-hearted men in

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the pulpit and in the pew. The love of God impels to bravery and heroism. This love purposes to win the world, and God-fearing men and women should see to it that no human impediment delays the glorious consummation.

Love is aggressive because it is love. It never fails. It has a message of welcome when all rights have been forfeited. It holds on in persistent hopefulness and insists on rescue even at the last moment. It importunes, it pleads, it forsakes never, and waits for the first cry of the penitent heart. O matchless eternal Love, we would hasten to embrace thee and abide in thee forever.

The church loses the capacity for aggressiveness when it loses the power of intercessory prayer. Nourishing and maintaining the spirit of prayer, the church can but be aggressive. Personally, the writer deplores the far too prevalent tendency to displace the service of actual prayer by long talks from the pastor or some other worker. If we had churches that prayed more, what they uttered would have far better effect. The spirit of true supplication compels a church to rise up with a burden of testimony that the present age needs very much to hear and the

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church needs very much to give. It is to be deplored that the voice of testimony has almost passed from our church gatherings. The world never needed so much as now a witnessing church to impress it with the reality of supernatural grace and power.

“I asked for grace to lift me high
Above the world’s depressing cares ;
God sent me sorrows ; with a sigh
I said, ‘He has not heard my prayers.’

“I asked for light, that I might see
My path along life’s thorny road ;
But clouds and darkness shadowed me
When I expected light from God.

“I asked for peace, that I might rest
To think my sacred duties o’er,
When lo ! such horrors filled my breast
As I had never felt before.

“And, oh, I cried, ‘Can this be prayer
Whose plaints the steadfast mountains move ?
Can this be Heaven’s prevailing care ;
And, O my God, is this thy love ?’

“But soon I found that sorrow, worn
As duty’s garment, strength supplies,
And out of darkness meekly borne
Unto the righteous light doth rise.

“And soon I found that fears which stirr’d
My startled soul God’s will to do,
On me more real peace conferr’d
Than in life’s calm I ever knew.

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“Then, Lord, in thy mysterious ways
Lead my dependent spirit on,
And whensoe'er it kneels and prays,
Teach it to say, ‘Thy will be done !’

“Let its one thought, one hope, one prayer,
Thine image seek—thy glory see ;
Let every other wish and care
Be left confidingly to thee !”

CHAPTER XII.

THE BENEDICTION.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (II. Thes. 3:5).

HAVING come to the last chapter of this book, what shall be the result of our meditations?

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (I. John 2:5).

God will direct our hearts into his love if we will but yield ourselves in unquestioning obedience to him. The divine Word makes plain what this obedience must involve. The results of this obedience have been illustrated again and again in the exalted character of those who have surrendered themselves thereto. They have on this account been enabled to make the best pages of human history. They have laid deep and abiding the foundations of our Christian civilization.

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When our hearts have been led into the love of God, obedience to him is no irksome task, for we soon learn that his love and his law are synonymous, in reality and essence.

The divine law is ever and always the output of the divine affection. Love is not always apparent in the law, but we can rest assured that it is always there. This fact should be borne in mind when the question of keeping God's word is brought before us. This consideration would seem to be sufficient to control the action of all rational creatures. Where the divine law seems to be arbitrary, it is not really so. Man becomes the subject of God's perfected love in the act of keeping his word. In certain stages of this wonderful experience our attitude is *essentially* an *act*. It seems clear that when we have the attitude of penitence before God on account of our sin and its wickedness in the presence of his redeeming love, God reckons the attitude an act of obedience. Beyond the initial experience of the Christian life the conduct of the obedient soul is determined by the divine law. It is this obedience subsequent to regeneration that affords the condition for the perfecting of the divine love in the

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individual experience. It is blessed to realize God's forgiving love, and beyond that to know his approving love. God's approval makes character strong and aggressive. It means buoyancy of spirit in the presence of the depressing and the discouraging. Keeping the divine word is a safe place for human life, and guarantees the best for the world that now is and that which is to come.

If we permit the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God we shall come "to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." With Christ as our pilot, let us go into the love of God as the ships go into the harbor. Harbored in this love, we find the hidings of power; we escape the tossing seas and all doubts as to our whereabouts and relationships; no more drifting with the tides, or surrender to merciless currents. Once harbored in the love of God we find outfit for true service. We are ready for assignment to any life-saving station, that we may rescue others whom storms assail. To know the love of Christ means that ever after we shall be life-savers. Harbored in the love of God, outfitted by grace and personal salvation, commissioned by the Captain of our salvation, who knows all about the storms that

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rage across the seas over which all the race must pass, we cannot do less than give ourselves lovingly to the work of rescue. May God multiply the rescuers and hasten them to the rescue. Millions are adrift in the pathless seas of paganism and heathenism. Our Lord would have them rescued. We must not fail of our full duty. We have been saved to serve.

When the Lord directs our hearts into the love of God we come under control of the true law of service—"for the love of Christ constraineth us." Here is the boundless resource of all the children of God. Here they refresh their wasting energies; here they renew their strength; here they find a commission that sends them forth as messengers of light and salvation. Here is the sublime motive of the universal church. Here is the noblest motive that can govern the life of any individual. He whom the love of the Christ doth constrain will be enabled to mightily serve his God and his generation. Here is the secret of the endurance, the patience, the fidelity, of the noble army of foreign missionaries who serve in their respective fields apart from the scenes and associations of native land and loving friends. The constraining

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love of Christ holds up the hearts of God's servants everywhere. But for this constraint there would come ruinous flinching from the exactions of effort in behalf of those who are straying from the truth and the right. It is natural for the human heart to be selfish and ready to excuse itself from the call for self-sacrificing service on account of others. Christ's transforming love works the miracle of disinterestedness in the human heart.

Where the love of God is absent an undue love of the world is sure to be present. This is ruinous to high character and lowers the average grade-line of life. Our lives need to be freed from the enslavements of this material environment. Nothing can do this but the love of God in individual realization. This realization makes us sensitive to our higher relationship and environment. It calls us off from our prostrations before that which is of the earth only. It elevates life to the dignity which becomes our sonship in the divine family. We are born for the mountains, for the summits that are above the cloud line, for the regions of perpetual sunlight. Why should we be willing to inhabit miasmatic low-

The Love of God

lands and plague-smitten districts? Up and away to the heights where we may bathe in the light of the divine love. These heights are not so elevated as to be impracticable or visionary. They are aglow with the inspirations that make us the allies of all humanitarian and philanthropic enterprises. They are voiceful with God's praise and human need. They cure us of lethargic and indifferent living. They inspire us to walk in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. They give the power of spiritual giants. They help us to walk worthy of our divine sonship.

And now, finally, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." "Keep yourselves in the love of God," for now abideth faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love. Amen and amen.

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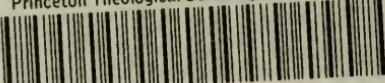
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